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ABSTRACT

The art of listening is no longer neglected, as may be seen by the materials (recreational and educational), articles, and book chapters which have come forth in the last five years. However, in order to improve communication among people, listening should be taught and teachers should integrate listening skill development into classroom activities. Care and time should be taken in preparing listening instruction, with special attention given to students' individual needs and interests. Numerous teaching strategies and materials may be utilized, both in individual instruction and in child-to-child communication. (JM)

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"Teaching to Listen and Listening To Teach"

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The value of having well developed listening skills has been discussed more frequently during the last five years than ever before. No longer is listening the most neglected of the Language Arts. Chapters on listening have been incorporated into Language Arts textbooks, books on listening games have been written and commercially prepared materials for the teaching of listening skills in the classroom have been developed and marketed.

Experts have classified listening skills and we find ourselves teaching youngsters to listen to "follow directions," "identify the main idea," and "listen for details." However, we must also teach listening to improve communication between people. So often we seem to be suffering from a "communication gap." We are so distracted by activity around us that we really don't listen to each other. Perhaps we as teachers need to make a more concentrated effort to integrate listening skill development into the classroom.

Motivating a child to listen requires the same consideration as motivating a child to read. The child needs to see that you value good listening. Therefore, the concerned teacher needs to spend time in the preparation of meeting listening skill needs. We have seen the need to individualize reading. Why not individualize listening? Unfortunately it <u>does</u> take time to assess individual attention spans, interest levels, experiential backgrounds and abilities. Take the time to do it. No one knows your students better than you.

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Take advantage of current trends. Integrate listening skills into the content area. Capitalize on contemporary educational strategies, educational technology and teacher expertise to provide for optimal listening skill growth in the child.

How About a Listening Laboratory or Listening Center?

Don't let the lack of sophisticated equipment inhibit you. Carrels and head phones are ideal but you can always use a refrigerator carton, an isolated corner of the room or a spare corridor. If you share grade levels with other teachers, make a listening skill tape library to be used by all of you. Design a series of sequentially developed activity tapes for following directions, identifying the main idea or listening for details. Prepare some corresponding activity sheets - use stick figure pictures for non-readers.

Integrate listening skill development with social studies by taping short news cast items (use newspaper articles if television and radio newscasts are inappropriate). Prepare a few comprehension questions to be answered after listening. Tape a "Sounds Around" series - sounds around the school, playground and home.

Multiple Response Activities

Give each child a set of cards with "who," "what," "where" and "when." Read a series of phrases that can be answered by one of the words. Each child holds up the response he thinks is correct. This method eliminates singling out an individual as being wrong. You can see who is making incorrect responses and remediate accordingly. The same principle may be applied to activities for identification of beginning and ending consonants. Children will

have cards saying "beginning" and "end" and hold up the correct response.

Child-to-Child Communication

We really don't encourage children to listen to each other. How often do elementary school teachers immediately repeat an answer just given to the class by a child? We call it reinforcement, but it actually discourages children from listening to each other. Why listen to someone in the back when the teacher will repeat the answer? The basic premise of the integrated day and family grouping is based on children learning from each other. In order to learn from each other, they must listen to each other. Design some activities for children to do in pairs or in small groups. Simple to complex designs can be reproduced with one child giving the directions. The person attempting to describe the design will learn the importance of giving clear instructions.

Sit two children back-to-back, each with an identical set of geometric shapes. Have one child construct a pattern with the shapes. The child must then describe his pattern to the child sitting behind him who must identically reproduce it. Children enjoy designing their own activities to be shared with the class. Use them whenever possible!

There are many teaching materials that can lend themselves to listening skill development in the hands of a concerned teacher. Poems, songs and instrumental music can all play a part in the daily listening skill program. Adaptation of commercially prepared materials to meet individual needs can further enhance listening skill building.

The incorporation of a listening skills program in the classroom is not an end product in itself. It is a means to further develop and foster a skill necessary to help bridge the communication gap.